Teleworking in the civil service following the pandemic

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FULL REPORT (FR)   SUMMARY (FR)

What we assessed and why

We assessed recent developments in the civil service's teleworking scheme, as well as the key points raised by its implementation in order to maintain quality of service.

The report examines the impact of teleworking on both civil servants and service users, and highlights the opportunity it offers to improve services.

What we found

Teleworking had developed significantly in the early 2010s, particularly in the civil service. However, at the time the pandemic began, it was not yet a prevalent way of working. The lockdowns saw a significant development in teleworking due to the pressing need to ensure the continuity of public services.

We found teleworking had become a strategic and operational challenge for public employers, in terms of both equipment and management. There had been significant investment in teleworking equipment for staff, audio and videoconferencing tools for the various departments, and training to enable staff to use the new tools and way of working, which were unfamiliar to many. Adapting IT infrastructure quickly was also a vital component in making teleworking more effective.

The large-scale rollout of teleworking across the civil service raised two potential pitfalls for employers. Aside from the need to ban certain practices (for example, converting part-time work into teleworking), employers had to, on the one hand, ensure that teleworking did not impact their departments' overall productivity, a matter that remained under discussion due to conflicting evidence. On the other hand, in order to ensure both productivity and fairness among staff, employers also had to establish effective ways of monitoring teleworking staff by providing guidelines and support for line managers.

What we concluded

While teleworking is essentially a tool for improving the quality of working life, we noted that a significant number of public employers were satisfied that it had had no negative impact on the work of their departments. We concluded that, given its great potential to improve public services, the perception that teleworking could be detrimental needed to be overcome.

We made several recommendations for the various stakeholders (specified in brackets):

- promote the provision of a proprietary videoconferencing tool that can be used throughout the civil service and is as easy to use as publicly available options (Prime Minister's Office, Ministry for Public Sector Transformation and the Civil Service);

- keep an up-to-date list of digital tools that meet security requirements, and encourage their use (Prime Minister's Office, French Cybersecurity Agency);

- assess the comprehensive impact of teleworking on office spaces and use "third workplaces" based on duly justified needs (Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, all public employers);

- share good practices to ensure the right to disconnect (Ministry for Public Sector Transformation and the Civil Service, Ministry of the Interior and Overseas, Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion, Ministry of Health and Prevention);

- mention in collective agreements the use of teleworking to temporarily facilitate job mobility and departmental reorganisation involving relocation (Ministry for Public Sector Transformation and the Civil Service, Ministry of the Interior and Overseas, Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion, Ministry of Health and Prevention);

- increase the use of videoconferencing in interactions with service users to complement face-to-face and telephone communication (Ministry for Public Sector Transformation and the Civil Service).